

CHAPTER 1 - AI IS NOT MAGIC. IT'S A MIRROR.

The Honest Map

What AI is genuinely good at, and where it needs your judgment.

Strong at patterns and language. Weak at facts and judgment. Keep that one sentence close and you will avoid most of the costly AI mistakes people make. Use the two lists below as a quick gut check, then use the practice section to apply it to something real.

Where AI Genuinely Helps

Go ahead and lean on AI for these. Review the result, but you do not need to be suspicious of it.

- Drafting a first version of an email, report, or presentation
- Summarizing a long document into key points
- Brainstorming options, angles, or alternatives
- Explaining a complex idea in simpler language
- Rewriting something in a different tone or style
- Spotting patterns across a large amount of text
- Translating between languages

Where AI Needs Your Judgment

Treat anything here as a first draft from a new colleague: useful, but not yet trustworthy on its own.

- Recent events, live prices, or anything time-sensitive, unless it is genuinely connected to a current source
- Specific facts, statistics, dates, names, and exact quotes: these are exactly what gets invented most convincingly
- Anything specific to your company that it was never shown: your policies, your customers, your history
- Judgment calls involving fairness, values, risk, or trade-offs that only you can weigh
- Knowing when it does not know: it rarely says “I'm not sure” on its own
- Reading office politics, emotional tension, or what a specific person truly values

Remember what AI is not

Not a search engine: it generates a fresh answer instead of finding existing pages.

Not a database: there is no single perfect record it pulls from.

Not a calculator: it predicts a likely pattern rather than following a precise rule.

Not a human brain: it has never lived a single day of the life it describes so fluently.

Try It Now

Think of one real task you are about to hand to AI this week, something you actually need, not a test question.

The task I am about to ask AI to help with:

Where does it sit? Mostly the left list, mostly the right list, or a bit of both:

If it leans right, what will I check before I trust the answer?

One thing from this map I want to remember next time I open an AI tool:

AI shows you patterns clearly. What you do with what it shows you is still entirely your job.